

DEED / VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
VRS COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2013 – 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
WOODBURY VRS OFFICE / HUDSON CONFERENCE ROOM

SESSION NOTES:

Committee Objective

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota's rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

- Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
- Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
- Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
- Consider input from subject matter experts in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
- Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
- Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources
- Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level that fosters equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis

2013 Community Partner Members (listed alphabetically): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Mike Harper, Dan Meyers, Julie Peterschick, Rachel Praught, Lori Sterner/Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Sara Sundeen, and Leslie Swartling

VRS Members: Becky Johnson, Peg Killen, Chris McVey, Roland Root, Dee Torgerson, and Jeri Werner

Sponsor: Kim Peck, VRS Director

Co-leaders: Chris McVey, David Sherwood-Gabrielson and Jan Thompson

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

2013 Schedule: Jan 25, Feb 22, Apr 26, Jun 28, Sep 27, Oct 25, and Dec 6.

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September 27, 2013 Session Objectives:

- * Provide an advisory check-in on the work previously done on Informed Choice in Minnesota, and to gather committee input on gathering quality customer satisfaction information for continuous improvement efforts
- * Facilitate the sharing of relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers

September 2013 Attendees (*listed alphabetically*): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Mike Harper, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Becky Johnson, Peg Killen, Dan Meyers, Chris McVey, Kim Peck, Rachel Praught, Roland Root, David Sherwood-Gabrielson, Sara Sundeen, Leslie Swartling, and Jan Thompson

Not in attendance: Gill Bessard, Julie Peterschick, Dee Torgerson, and Jeri Werner

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

Agenda Topics:

- * Welcome / Overview
- * Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics
- * Advisory Committee Process: 2014 Cohort Open Application and Selection
- * Strategic Check-in and Dialogue: Informed Choice in Minnesota: How are we doing? How do we lead to the next level with continuous improvement?
- * Wrap Up/Adjourn

Meeting Highlights:

- The committee discussed observations related to the implementation of the Informed Choice provisions and best practices in Minnesota
- The committee discussed options for gathering better information on VRS customers in order to better understanding existing service levels as well as to identify and address gaps and improvement opportunities

Next Steps:

- **DOCUMENT SESSION NOTES:** Documentation and communication of session notes for key audiences including committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
- **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY DEVELOPMENT:**
 - VRS will continue to pursue development of a customer satisfaction survey. Staff will look into the potential of collaboration with CARF accredited providers to explore acceptance for a multi-purpose survey/public information usage to reduce the survey burden on CRPs and to increase information benefits for consumers.
- **OCTOBER VR COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORY** - Steve Brink will provide the October story.
- **NEXT MEETING:** Next meeting is Friday, October 25th.

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Welcome and Opening

The committee was reconvened for the first time since the June 28th session.

Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics

❖ CRP updates:

- Steve Brink
 - **Tran\$Em** is transitioning to a 100% IPS service model.
 - Half of the organization will be participating in the northern region's Next Generation Placement pilot and half will continue using the existing PBA structure.
- Becky Bazarre
 - **Lifetrack Resources** is "refreshing" their branding with building updates, an updated logo and through emphasis on the 'Lifetrack' portion of the legal name.
 - Awarded an IPS grant from Ramsey county mental health. Grant funded services will be housed in Ramsey county mental health center. The three year contract will support five additional staff starting October 1, 2013. All five staff additions will be placement specialists. Lifetrack will also be incorporating a peer specialist into the team.
 - Lifetrack has contracted with RISE for benefits analysis.
- Amanda Jensen-Stahl
 - **Goodwill Easter Seals** completed a findings free Extended Employment audit
 - They will be part of the metro region's Next Generation Placement pilot
 - Approaching end of fiscal year on September 30 and optimistic about reaching goal of 1,158 served in programs across the entire agency.
 - Excited about opening of new stores in St Louis Park and Minneapolis
- Heather Deutschlaender
 - **ProAct** is in the process of updating their contract to include CPR first aid training
 - They are moving forward with the REDI Walgreens program and adding three staff to support
 - Continuing to provide customized employment for the Dakota and Washington counties (DISCOVERY model)
- Rachel Praught
 - **Functional Industries** was awarded an IPS expansion grant
 - They are supporting a team at the Walgreens transitional work group in distribution
- Laura Bealey
 - **MRCI - Mankato** has broke ground on their new building and plan to consolidate a number of programs into that building
 - New candy contracts in Holiday and Target stores are keeping them busy
 - MRCI has invited local Representative Tim Walz and other legislators to visit and see services provided to constituents

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- MRCI is actively reviewing concerns related to the Olmstead Decision with Minnesota Senators Franken and Klobuchar offices
- Undergoing a major software system update
- Awarded an IPS expansion grant for EE/SMI. Hiring new FTE to staff.
- Leslie Swartling
 - **WORC** completed their Extended Employment audit with no issues
 - They had a celebratory ribbon cutting for their new commercial laundry facility
 - Awarded an IPS grant to expand services from Winona County further into Southeastern Minnesota to include Wabasha, Houston and Fillmore counties bringing a total of four counties into transformation
 - Work is underway on their next CARF survey which is due in six months
- Dan Meyers
 - **Opportunity Partners** also completed an Extended Employment audit
 - They are approaching their annual placement goal of 126 with three months yet to go in the program year
 - Staff recently completed a 2-day DISCOVERY training with Bob Niemiec of Griffin-Hammis Associates
 - Participation in Walgreen's REDI program has resulted in 3 hires at this point. They are beginning to see the class and training converting to hires
 - Opportunity Partners is involved in the '5% campaign' to get legislators support for a raise for direct support professionals. See Facebook page for more information.

❖ DEED/VRS updates:

- VRS is approaching end of FFY2013 on September 30, 2013. Congress is still working on resolving the budget. VRS currently estimates it will only be able to 'keep our doors open' 6-8 weeks if Congress fails to fund the federal government. VRS is able to leverage the state appropriation in the short term even if there is a delay in the federal funding level.
- Senate Bill 1356 is a ***proposed reauthorization bill for the Workforce Investment Act***. Currently moving to the Senate, the bi-partisan sponsored bill is expected to pass. If passed, the likely next stage will be working sessions aimed at resolving the differences in House and Senate versions. Given current issues including budget/debt ceiling deadlines and Syria, there is little expectation that WIA reauthorization efforts will be acted before end of calendar year at the earliest.

Some of the most significant changes in the Bill involve the creation of a 15% Transition budget expectation (without additional funding) and requiring pre-employment placement coordinators to work with schools to develop more work experiences before kids leave school. While supportive of Senator Harkin's desire to provide greater service progress for ADA youth, funding constraints raise concerns around the potential impacts and ability to sustain current service levels for adults. Also contained within Bill 1356, the reporting relationship of Public Vocational Rehabilitation program is proposed to change from Department of Education to the Department of Labor.

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- The Governor appointed subcabinet commissioned to develop **Minnesota's Olmstead Plan** is currently working on a third draft. A final Olmstead Plan is expected for presentation to the District Court on November 1st. David Sherwood-Gabrielson has been working on the final editing process. With the addition of an external consultant to the subcabinet's work this summer, the earlier draft focus has shifted from transformational to incremental change with an assumption of no change in funding. VRS will continue to keep the CRP Advisory Committee apprised of the Subcabinet's work.
- VRS Field Director Jan Thompson provided the **field services update**. Jan sees a positive year for the full community and work is on pace to meet the goal of 2,510 employment outcomes for the program year. Partnerships have been very strong and have made a big difference. Across the state, there is a strong sense of community, partnership and collaboration. Earlier in the month, VRS engaged PACER in an all staff meeting on the topic of Transition, and helping engage families and schools with transition youth work experience and career planning. VRS Transition efforts are led by VRS Transition Specialist Alyssa Klein. Alyssa is helping staff work with the full spectrum of family/parental support connected with transition youth and assisting the regions in creating local groups to work on transition goals.
- VRS Strategic Initiatives Director Chris McVey announced that training has been conducted to support all four pilots involved in the **launch of the Next Generation Placement pilots** - one in each VRS region: Northern, Metro, and Southern as well as a Metro pilot for Deaf Hard of Hearing. VRS conducted two day trainings for each pilot site with the first day specific for VRS staff and the second day dedicated to the full VR community to review the process, roles and responsibilities. The pilot has involved numerous preparations including updating language, forms, and WF1 etc. to support the pilots.

Pilots will kickoff October 1st and are based on Next Generation Placement Services Design Team recommendations approved in October 2012. The pilots will focus on the transformational process changes rooted in a true team approach.

Three pilots are testing the process with the existing three payments/pilot five milestones (Southern, Metro, and Deaf Hard of Hearing pilots) and the Northern Pilot will explore the five payment/five milestone model. All pilots will be tracking their efforts for statewide evaluation purposes so that VRS can determine how to move forward after the pilots are conducted and understood. Pilots will run for at least one year to gather sufficient information on process and outcomes.

- Committee member Sara Sundeen provided the September community partnership success story: *Sara shared the story of working with a challenging consumer who at long last found the job of her dreams and left a wonderful, uplifting voicemail for her counselor upon being given the job offer!*

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Advisory Committee Process: 2014 Cohort Open Application and Selection

The facilitator reviewed the staggered membership process with the CRP Advisory Committee and reviewed the current cohort who are completing their first term of service on December 31, 2013. Members are encouraged to reapply in an open application process that will be conducted in Q4 2013 with a goal of making the four appointments by year end to begin terms of service for 2014-2016.

The advisory was encouraged to spread the word on the open application process to colleagues who might be interested in serving for the greater vocational rehabilitation community in Minnesota. In general, each four member cohort appointment is selected to foster statewide representation of approximately one from northern region, one from southern region and two from metro region.

A 2014 cohort announcement and application will be emailed to the current VRS distribution list of CRPs and LUVs later this autumn. If you have any questions, please contact any of the Advisory Committee co-chairs.

Strategic Check In and Dialogue: Informed Choice in Minnesota

The afternoon session was focused on gathering observations and experiences related to the implementation and continuous improvement efforts for Informed Choice in Minnesota.

Advisory Committee Members were joined by VRS Policy Specialist Heather Farmer who guided the committee through the federal requirements and what exists to support them today. Heather reviewed a handout of Informed Choice regulations 361.52 which includes the following sections:

- (a) General provision
- (b) Written policies and procedures
- (c) Information and assistance in the selection of vocational rehabilitation services and service providers
- (d) Methods or sources of information

Approximately a year ago, VRS formed a work group to delve deeper into sections (c) and (d). The work group explored information available, formats, and methods of gathering information to meet the requirements. This work led to a newly designed website to support Informed Choice for VRS consumers that was piloted with the North St Paul office this summer. VRS is currently gathering feedback from consumers including transition youth on the information provided on the website to understand what benefits it provides for consumers in making informed decisions on services and service providers.

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Kim spoke of VRS's desire to find a way to pull existing information together in a format similar to an 'Angie's List' where consumers have access to accurate, current information on available services as well as consumer satisfaction information on those services and providers. Initial challenges to creating this type of information exchange include:

- Missing key information such as duration of services to provide meaningful comparison information for consumers.
- Missing customer satisfaction information. Initial hopes to leverage customer satisfaction information that CRPs are already reporting to CARF have been tempered by the wide variety of surveys and the difficulty in aggregating survey data. In addition, VRS concluded that information required by CARF does not answer all the same questions that our consumers are asking.

Given the challenges, VRS deemed it a good juncture to check in with the CRP Advisory Committee to hear their ideas on how to gather good feedback on a set of measures/elements that reflect what people would find worthwhile and helpful as it relates to informed choices in vocational rehabilitation services and service providers. Kim stated her awareness of the potential sensitivities around what information is gathered and displayed. In the context of gathering useful 'dashboard' items for the benefit of consumers, providers and VRS, she asked CRPs for their perspectives on the following areas related to customer feedback:

- *What would you want your customers to provide input on regarding their service experience?*
- *What are the 'dashboard' items that would be helpful to consider in the survey's development?*
- *What's important to keep in mind to be sensitive to the information and its display?*

Advisory Committee inputs around potential way to improve the surveying of VRS customer satisfaction with services received at CRPs, LUVs and VRS are summarized as follows:

Advisory Discussion Question #1: What are the elements of informed choice services and service providers that you think make the most sense to ask about?

- *Program/Service Specific questions e.g. placement, evaluation, etc.*
- *Length of time to get in (intake), how long did it take for your first meeting?*
- *Did you feel respected?*
- *Did you feel listened to?*
- *Was the communication effective?*
- *Did you feel like part of the process?*
- *Was your disability understood?*
- *How satisfied are you with the job you took?*
- *Would you go back?*
- *Would you recommend this service provider to your friends needing service?,*
- *Do have any recommendations for improvement?*

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- *What did you really enjoy about the program?*
- *Were their additional/different services you would have found helpful?*
- *What would you do differently?*
- *Questions that probe key areas: caring/listening/support/results*

Advisory Discussion Question #2: What are your concerns about customer satisfaction surveying for informed choice?

- The rate of return can vary greatly depending on survey method and length. Steve Brink mentioned how effective the short phone survey he gets by phone from his auto repair shop the day after service is completed versus lengthy paper surveys received in the mail.
- The 'n' or sample size for each provider could vary a great deal e.g. 5 survey responses vs larger pool can impact ratings significantly
- We need to find a way to ask consumers about consumer satisfaction elements and then combine inputs to develop the top indicators of quality service for the purpose of developing the survey.

Advisory Discussion Question #3: What are your ideas and insights for improving the process and outcomes around customer satisfaction surveys?

- Finding ways to acknowledge and incorporate the other factors such as personality and relationship matching that play into customer satisfaction
- Determining appropriate times/milestones to survey consumers e.g. the 60-day placement process check-in, at closure, etc.
- Amanda Jensen Stahl shared that Goodwill Easter Seals has gathered excellent feedback from consumers using focus groups. The organization committed to training leadership team members on focus group facilitation and it was highly effective. Ground rules included no staff members in the session with anyone they had worked with directly. The focus groups ran about 1.5 hours and included lunch for the participants. They also enjoyed a high participation rate with 18 of 25 invited attending. Participants included a broad range of customer experiences from those who left early, to those currently receiving services, to those who had completed services.
- Mike Harper encouraged VRS not to reinvent the wheel if valid tools such as 'USpeak' CARF accredited questions list manual could potentially be adapted for informed choice purposes.

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Per the federal regulations on Informed Choice, VRS is charged with providing information and assistance to Minnesotans in the selection of vocational rehabilitation services and service providers. The committee agreed that VRS is the natural and appropriate entity to gather and administer a statewide source for such information and agreed to assist in the development of a survey to effectively address those needs in Minnesota. In addition to fulfilling federal obligations around Informed Choice, there is a great opportunity to increase transparency and access to information for consumers in a way that assists CRPs and VRS in ongoing service assessment and continuous improvement.

In concluding the afternoon session, Kim thanked the committee for their input. VRS is currently interviewing for the new position of Director of Program & Service Quality. The person hired will be charged with developing the surveying methodology as one of the first things to tackle once on board. She stated that VRS is at the front end of this effort and will continue to engage the advisory committee as the customer satisfaction survey develops.

For more information on Informed Choice: <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/ddp/PolicyDetail.aspx?pol=48>.

KEY MESSAGES FROM TODAY

Important Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community:

- Informed choice is an important and required part of vocational rehabilitation. In December 2011, the CRP Advisory Committee approved a framework of eight recommendations that have been endorsed statewide to more fully realize both the spirit and the letter of the law on Informed Choice.
- Minnesota's network of services and service providers provide a wide array of options to serve the needs of Minnesotans with disabilities. As a statewide advisory committee, we believe that accurate, accessible and useful information is important for consumers, providers and VRS alike. It assists us in achieving a better understanding of current services and satisfaction levels as well as provides valuable insights into our service gaps and improvement opportunities.
- The committee believes that quality customer satisfaction feedback has great potential to strengthen Minnesota's Informed Choice through greater access and quality of information on vocational rehabilitation services and service providers. The committee will assist VRS in the development of a statewide survey.
- The committee developed a number of potential survey question dimensions around satisfaction with process, outcomes, and consumer input on the future.